

THE FIRST WEST CORK HISTORY FESTIVAL AND

# WEST CORK's War of Independence

SECTARIANISM PETER HART

KILMICHAEL AMBUSH TOM BARRY



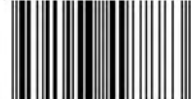
A discussion in the *Southern Star* (Cork), *Irish Times*, *Sunday Independent* (Dublin), with

**TOM COOPER - GERRY GREGG - EOGHAN HARRIS - CAL HYLAND - BARRY KEANE**

**SIMON KINGSTON - NIALL MEEHAN - EVE MORRISON - JOHN REGAN - DONALD WOOD**

plus **MEDA RYAN** and **PAT MULDOWNY**

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Edited by Jack Lane

**THE AUBANE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2017**

# WEST CORK'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Sectarianism, the Kilmichael Ambush, Tom Barry, and Peter Hart

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**PLUS MEDA RYAN AND PAT MULDOWNNEY**

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**Front cover images** (clockwise from top left): Adjunct Professor the late Peter Hart; former *Sunday Times* columnist Kevin Myers; *Sunday Independent* columnist and *An Tost Fada* scriptwriter Eoghan Harris; *Sunday Times*, 28 August 2012, article in which John Young, son of Edward ('Ned') Young, last survivor of the Kilmichael Ambush, disputed Peter Hart's claim to have 'interviewed' his then 96-year-old father anonymously in 1988

## THE IRISH BULLETIN

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THE AUBANE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2017



# The outcome of the first West Cork History Festival

The advertising blurb for the First West Cork History festival this year told us that it,

... will span a diverse set of places, historical subjects and periods, from the local to the international, ranging from the Knights Templar to the events of the Irish revolutionary period in West Cork. Leading historians will be joined by journalists and senior diplomats, and while much of their focus will be on Irish themes, the perspective will be international. The festival will be informal, participatory and with a menu for the intellectually omnivorous.

This was all very welcome but it is a pity that the Festival did not invite any local historians to address it on the history of West Cork and in particular on the controversial issues that have bedevilled that history since publication of the late Professor Peter Hart's work. He created the current interest in West Cork's history some twenty years ago. Everybody knows this. This Festival was indebted to him for this interest.

However, the serious discussion on his work occurred outside the Festival in the pages of the *Southern Star* and elsewhere.

This is a collection of the correspondence from that paper and other items that deal in detail with the 'legacy issues' arising from Professor Hart's work. The first letter, illustrated right, from Tom Cooper, generated 22 more items of correspondence and a news report, between 27 May and 26 August 2017 on three topics:

1. Three letters, from Cooper and Simon Kingston, on the festival;
2. Four letters, from Cooper and from Gerry Gregg on his and Eoghan Harris's documentary, *An Tost Fada* ('The Long Silence'), plus one newspaper report;
3. Five letters each from Eve Morrison and Niall Meehan, three from Barry Keane, and one each from Donald Woods and John Regan, on Peter Hart, Tom Barry and the 28 November 1922 Kilmichael Ambush.

In addition, due to Barry Roche in the *Irish Times* reporting RTÉ's re-editing of *An Tost Fada*, Tom Cooper had a letter published on his role in that decision. It occasioned three replies, to which the *Irish Times* denied Cooper a response, which we publish here. We also publish an important 2014 letter from Meda Ryan to *History Ireland*, in response to a commentary on Ryan by Eve Morrison (in a review of Pádraig O Ruairc's book, *Truce*).

This is by far the most useful outcome of the Festival despite not being part of it. Another event that played both on and off-stage was the *Sunday Times* ('Éire' edition) dismissal of Peter Hart's original supporter and a festival contributor, Kevin Myers. In his column on the morning of the last festival day, Myers combined misogyny and anti-Semitism, attacking women generally and Jewish women in particular. He had made his reputation, alongside Hart, criticising IRA commander Tom Barry and other republicans. Myers spent his festival afternoon beside a female Jewish rabbi, under a portrait of Tom Barry. That part, you couldn't make up.

We hope that the organisers of next year's Festival will arrange for a continuation of such forensic discussion of West Cork's history. They can do so by ensuring that the local and national participants in the *Southern Star* discussion are invited to the Festival. It is surely sensible that such contributions are made at the Festival as well as outside it. It would be useful also to ascertain how to apply to join the secretive Festival Committee.

**Jack Lane, Aubane Historical Society.**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### More historical, less hysterical analysis

SIR – I am pleased that West Cork is to have its first history festival in July. However, I am saddened that the speakers chosen to discuss the War of Independence period express a narrow range of opinions.

It might more accurately be renamed the West Brit History Festival. Eoghan Harris and Kevin Myers require little introduction. They have expended acres of newspaper print extolling the merits of a historian who claimed he spoke to a participant in the November 1920 Kilmichael Ambush, six days after the last (97-year-old) veteran died. I refer to the late Peter Hart.

Another participant, Eve Morrison, supported Hart's claim and stated she was on the trail of the mystery man. That was five years ago. Appropriately, Ms Morrison is speaking on 'Cork Ghosts of the Irish Revolution'.

The combined efforts of these four to undermine the standing of ambush commander Tom Barry, and of the IRA generally, reduced academic history (and 'historical' journalism) to a laughing stock for a considerable period. Roy Foster, who spoke for himself when he said in 1986, 'We are all revisionists now,' is giving the introductory lecture. He, presumably, will set the tone at this cosy get-together.

The festival will resuscitate the sectarian theory that the

IRA was sectarian during the War. Eoghan Harris will show his incompetent 2012 documentary, *An Tost Fada*. I hope festival-goers will be informed of at least one serious error, admitted by RTE after I complained.

The programme stated that two Protestant farmers, Matthew Connell and William Sweetnam, were killed in a sectarian attack in April 1922 after the Truce and Treaty, whereas they were actually killed beforehand, in February 1921, for reasons that were not sectarian. There are other howlers in the programme, which contemporary Protestants would have recognised as propaganda. The decade of remembrance needs broad discussion and a fair representation of opinion. This event is one-sided, with one partial exception: Andy Bielenberg. He was subject to a Harris-Myers mauling when his analysis, and that of John Borgonovo, on conflict deaths did not reproduce their imaginative views.

I hope he is not subject to more trumped-up fake-history claims. I suggest that the organisers broaden out the discussion, even at this late stage, so that more historical and less hysterical analysis is advanced.

**Yours sincerely,  
Tom Cooper,  
118, Templeville Road,  
Dublin 6W.**

# The Southern Star

50,000 READERS EVERY WEEK – WEST CORK'S LARGEST CIRCULATING WEEKLY

## More Historical, less hysterical analysis

27 May 2017

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TOM COOPER, DUBLIN

## Two *Southern Star* letters on the West Cork History Festival

### Disappointment at pre-judgement of Festival

10 June 2017

I am glad that Mr Cooper (Letters, May 26<sup>th</sup>) is pleased that West Cork is to have its first history festival (July 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> near Skibbereen <http://www.westcorkhistoryfestival.org>). Indeed, we on the organising committee hope he might come down from Dublin to join us. It is disappointing, that he has chosen to pre-judge the event based on his opinion of some of the contributors.

Our aim is to complement the already rich cultural programme of the area.

The Festival will cover a range of subjects and periods, from the Knights Templar in Ireland, to piracy off the west coast, to Irish involvement in the First World War. We are honoured that so eminent a scholar as Professor Roy Foster has agreed to give the opening talk.

One of the Festival's subjects, to which Mr Cooper refers, is the Revolutionary period in Cork and elsewhere in the country. Our contributors will approach this from several different perspectives and we anticipate that there will be a lively discussion. We do not imagine this will be the last word on the subject, nor on the wider themes of the approaching centenaries of the 1919 to 1923 years, on which Professor Eunan O'Halpin will speak.

We do intend, though, to make a contribution to a broader conversation. As mentioned, this is far from the only topic of the Festival. Another highlight will be a screening of *Rebel Rossa*, the biopic of the Fenian leader, featuring the late Shane Kenna of UCC.

Our ambition is that this will be the first in a series of annual events.

All are welcome to participate, including Mr Cooper, his judgment of its merits, historical or hysterical as he chooses, would be better informed by attending the event.

SIMON KINGSTON

CHAIR WEST CORK HISTORY FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

### Fears about History Festival not allayed

25 June 2017

I am pleased that Simon Kingston is glad ('Disappointment at pre-judgement of History Festival,' June 10<sup>th</sup>). However, he has not allayed fears that the West Cork History Festival promotes a narrow view of Ireland's independence struggle.

He mentions Professor Eunan O'Halpin, who I omitted in my original letter. Prof O'Halpin narrated a two-part television programme in 2013. Part one dug up a field in Laois, in a futile attempt to uncover two disappeared IRA bodies from the 1920-21 period.





West Cork History Festival audience consult Aubane pamphlet, *The Embers of Revisionism*, by Niall Meehan and Brian Murphy, while awaiting Roy Foster's lecture.



Futile because it turned out that the IRA did not shoot them. They survived the conflict unscathed. After that damp squib, in part two, Prof O'Halpin made exaggerated claims about the number of spies shot by the Cork IRA, and about the supposed innocence of those verifiably killed.

In the interests of inclusivity, I note that I also failed to mention the presence of Ruth Dudley Edwards, another aficionado of the excitable Kevin Myers - Eoghan Harris school of revisionism.

I would be very happy to accept Simon Kingston's kind invitation to attend, were it not for the €180 price of admission, including dinner, excluding accommodation. If I eat a pack lunch (forgoing dinner) and sleep (like many homeless people today) in my car, I am afraid €80 is still too steep.

I daresay the cost is beyond that of many of the fine Cork people I know, who I am sure feel as I do that the festival programme represents a co-location of the converted. I have no problem with the advertised participants chatting amongst themselves, rather like the RIC in 1920 confined to barracks.

However, the festival is advertised as supported and funded (how much?) by Fáilte Ireland and is patronised by other fine persons. It appears broader than it actually is.

Perhaps the secretive organising committee, whose names are not on the festival website (please correct), could consider issuing further invitations. There is still time.

Perhaps also, in the interests of actual debate, some of the similarly-minded, advertised to speak, might volunteer to forgo their place. A different point of view might refresh the cloying atmosphere promoted by the current programme.

TOM COOPER, DUBLIN

### Four letters on *An Tost Fada* ('The Long Silence') plus newspaper report

#### Criticisms of *An Tost Fada* film answered

4 June 2017

May I make three points about Tom Cooper's tantrum of a letter in last week's Southern Star in which he made wild accusations about the 2012 RTE film, *An Tost Fada*, presented by Eoghan Harris and produced by me for Praxis Pictures

First, Cooper is a serial complainer to editors of national newspapers on issues which offend his extreme nationalist

politics, including attacking the SDLP for commemorating the Irish dead of WW1.

Second, Cooper's complaint about alleged bias in *An Tost Fada* was rejected by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

Third, *An Tost Fada* is the personal testimony of Canon George Salter and not a polemic by Eoghan Harris or myself, as Cooper implies.

Canon Salter told a story that was both tragic and redemptive: how in April 1921, the IRA intimidated his father and mother to leave their family farm near Dunmanway at few hours' notice – but how they later returned to West Cork and resumed farming.

Cooper, having lost his case at the BAI, falls back on neurotic nit-picking. He calls it 'a serious error' when Canon Salter conflates the date of the shooting of two innocent Protestant farmers, Matthew Connell and William Sweetnam, in February 1921, with the shooting of 13 Protestants in the Bandon Valley in April 1922 – a slip of memory by an elderly man in his late eighties, which has no bearing whatsoever on the core issue of IRA intimidation.

Cooper is less interested in the dates than in denial. He claims Connell and Sweetnam were shot 'for reasons that were not sectarian.' That's not how it seemed to Protestants at the time.

As producer of the multi award-winning film *Close to Evil*, featuring Bergen-Belsen survivor, Tomi Reichental, let me put Cooper's campaign to explain away IRA crimes in a European context.

Recently, I returned with Tomi Reichental to film in Eastern European countries where ethnic cleansing of Jews had taken place. Everywhere we met a few good people who were willing to face what their grandfathers had done. But mostly we met nationalists and neo-fascists in deep denial.

Canon George Salter's testimony in *An Tost Fada* is a contribution to the truth that sets us free, and we are proud to present it as part of the West Cork History Festival.

GERRY GREGG, PRAXIS PICTURES

**'Fishy on facts and high on hyperbole'**

17 June 2017

Gerry Gregg's defence of his and Eoghan Harris's flawed documentary *An Tost Fada* is fishy on facts, high on hyperbole (*Southern Star*, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017).

He forgot to mention that RTÉ accepted two of my complaints about the programme, which alleged IRA sectarianism against Protestants during and after the War of Independence. Gerry Gregg is wrong about the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, to which I took the remainder of my concerns. The BAI did not 'reject' my complaint. It determined that the programme 'did not have to comply with ... statutory requirements for fairness, objectivity and impartiality.' RTÉ agreed that this conclusion misread broadcasting legislation. Getting off on a dubious technicality is not vindication.

Gregg stated that the programme consisted of 'personal testimony' about events in 1922. That was three years before the subject of the programme, Canon George Salter, was born. Messrs Gregg and Harris should have checked family lore against evidence. They did not bother.

The programme reported that two Protestant victims of the IRA were killed some 15 months after the fact, eight months after the War of Independence concluded. Amazingly, this was accompanied by a camera shot of a gravestone that conveniently omitted the date of death inscribed on it. Why this startling ineptitude? It suited the programme's polemic about the IRA shooting Protestants for sectarian reasons.

RTÉ understated matters when it admitted 'this mistake should have been identified and corrected during the production process.' Gregg's attempt to blame this mistake on Canon Salter demonstrates a mean and unprofessional inability to take responsibility for errors. The documentary makers did not do their job.

During and after the War of Independence, southern Protestant opinion was divided. Most were revolted by Crown Force methods. A minority actively supported British reprisals and torture. The IRA targeted these latter when republican lives and liberty were put in jeopardy. The same happened with Roman Catholic informers and spies. There is no solid evidence of religion-based targeting. Republicans acted generally in the non-sectarian traditions of the movement founded by Wolfe Tone. That is why some Protestants joined it. Others said they feared Crown Forces more so than 'Sinn Féiners'. The Black & Tans and Auxiliaries, which had been opposed to independence forces, were precursors of the Nazi Freikorps, as Conor Cruise O'Brien noted in 1965.

Also opposing the all-Ireland Dáil forces were London newspapers like the *Morning Post*, which blamed Irish resistance on Bolshevik, Jewish, agitators. Such reactionary anti-Semitic ideas nurtured the formation later of Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts. That is a real 'European context,' not Mr Gregg's pathetic attempt to link Ireland's liberation war against a sectarian and racist empire with Nazi atrocities. Jews in Ireland at the time supported Sinn Féin and the IRA. Were they anti-Protestant too?

When not giving out about Jews and other 'aliens' during the 1920s, the *Morning Post*, plus die-hard English Tories, shed copious tears for southern Irish loyalists. They were successful in agitating for 'compensation,' causing thousands of said loyalists to make retrospective and often lucrative claims. Compensation file testimony reads like a very damp squib, as far as accusations of IRA sectarianism are concerned. Gregg and Harris did not bother to consult Canon Salter's father's testimony, which corrected other mistakes in their programme. In it, former Crown Prosecutor Jasper Wolfe stated that persecution was due to loyalty, not religion.

A critic of the Gregg-Harris film afterwards gave the file contents to Canon Salter. RTÉ stated in 2012 that it will 'ensure that (*An Tost Fada* mistakes are) corrected in any future broadcast'. So, Mr Gregg and Mr Harris: have you corrected them? Are West Cork History Festival goers to get unvarnished or varnished fiction dressed up as fact?

TOM COOPER, DUBLIN

**'Another outburst of toxic bile'**

1 July 2017

Readers of The Southern Star were treated in the issue of June 17<sup>th</sup> to yet another outburst of toxic bile from Tom Cooper against Eoghan Harris and myself concerning our film for RTÉ, *An Tost Fada*, featuring Canon George Salter.

Once again, Mr Cooper spreads his poison while posing as a champion of truth and accuracy when it comes to any examination of the actions of the IRA during the 1919-23 period.

Your readers should know that, contrary to Mr Cooper's claims, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland did 'reject' his complaint about the programme in October 2012.

The BAI Compliance Committee chairperson, Chris Morash, stated that, 'upon a review of the programme it was the Committee's view that the programme did not contain any content that could be considered contrary to Section 3.5 (Factual Programming) of the BAI Code of Programme Standards.'

However Mr. Cooper's real grievance with Eoghan Harris and me is not about the details of *An Tost Fada* or the testimony of Canon Salter.

Both of us had relatives who took up arms to forge an independent Irish State. Both of us were reared in a tradition that looked upon the campaign of the IRA as heroic and noble.

Both of us have spent our lives asking questions about what we were told about the fight for 'Irish Freedom.'

For Tom Cooper, asking such questions is tantamount to treason.

In the case of what happened in West Cork in 1921-22, we believe local Protestants were the victims of sectarian murder perpetrated by IRA Volunteers. Tom Cooper will deny that fact until the day he has to face St Peter.

Southern Star readers can make up their own minds about the film and the story Canon Salter relates when *An Tost Fada* is screened at the West Cork History Festival in Skibbereen.

Thankfully, Ireland is still a free country.

GERRY GREGG, PRAXIS PICTURES



**Ruth Dudley Edwards, Rabbi Julia Neuberger, Kevin Myers (under Tom Barry portrait), on last day of festival. While he sat, the *Sunday Times* fired Myers. His column that day justified low pay for female BBC employees and for women generally. It also reproduced anti-Semitic stereotypes about Jews and money. Myers was Peter Hart's first and most prolific champion.**

### A problem with reason, not treason

22 July 2017

'Outburst of toxic bile... spreading poison... asking questions is tantamount to treason'.

Gerry Gregg's response (July 1<sup>st</sup> 2017) to criticism of his documentary *An Tost Fada* ('The Long Silence') plumbed new depths. The view it presents of my position is politically deranged. Momentarily, I thought I was reading the 'North Korean Star'.

The Broadcasting Authority Ireland did not examine my complaint, for the reason cited on 17 June. Mr Gregg's separate citation does not contradict that fact. I repeat, he got off on a technicality.

Mr. Gregg did not address the mistakes RTE admitted, apart from blaming the elderly subject of his programme. We still don't know whether they will be corrected at the West Cork History Festival.

Gerry Gregg and Eoghan Harris, please tell us if you will comply with RTE's 2012 commitment. Please be a mensch, Mr. Gregg.

It is indeed commendable that, as Mr. Gregg assures us, he and Eoghan Harris spent their lives asking questions. It is a pity they came up with so many wrong answers. Avoiding inconvenient evidence will do that.

Mr Gregg has his mind made up, having completed his questionnaire on life. His problem is not with treason, but with reason.

Sectarianism and its first cousin, racism, are a foul corruption of our common humanity. It was rejection of that component of British rule within the Irish body politic that motivated republican and socialist opposition. Those who were most solicitous of the alleged plight of southern loyalists tended also to be racist and anti-Semitic.

Jasper Wolfe, former Crown solicitor for Cork, later independent TD for West Cork, stated that he was an IRA target because of his role not his religious identity. He later became friends with the person who tried to kill him. Wolfe's views were similar to those of most southern Protestants. His biographer, his nephew, reiterated the non-

sectarian nature of Jasper Wolfe's personal and professional experiences.

Accusations of IRA sectarianism might stick in relation to one three-day period, 26-9 April 1922 in West Cork. There is a historical discussion about that, pro and con. Mr. Gregg's approach in his documentary was to present facts supporting his opinion, to confuse and to generalise from them.

Will those of a sceptical disposition at the West Cork History Festival, tempted to comment after the credits roll, experience a similar gale of outrage? If so, Messrs Gregg and Harris might experience another 'long silence'.

In the meantime, I suggest that Mr Gregg learn the art of sticking to and attacking the point, not the man (or woman or Catholic or Protestant, or Muslim or Jew).

TOM COOPER, DUBLIN

### *Southern Star* report:

#### History festival to screen amended documentary

Jackie Keogh 27 July 2017

A CORRECTED version of a documentary about the killing of Protestants in West Cork in the 1920s will be screened at noon on Saturday, July 29<sup>th</sup> as part of the inaugural West Cork History Festival.

The documentary – *An Tost Fada*, The Long Silence – is an RTE production that was first shown in 2012, but was not broadcast in the intervening years because it contained a number of errors.

RTE confirmed that an edited version of the documentary in which the inaccuracies have been removed has been licensed to the festival at a rate of €600.

Gerry Gregg, the producer, confirmed that two errors have been rectified. The first – an incorrect date of April 1922 was given for the IRA shooting of Matthew Connell and William Sweetnam – has been amended to February 1921.

The second – a claim that Canon George Salter's father, William, had received £1,700 compensation from the British government – has been removed from the edited version.

Eoghan Harris, who wrote and narrated the documentary, will attend the screening at noon at Rosebank House, just outside of Skibbereen on the Tragumna Road, and will discuss the documentary with the audience afterwards.

Organisers of the West Cork History Festival say they are pleased to include the amended film as part of a full programme of events over the weekend Friday, July 28th to Sunday, July 30th.

The documentary is a personal account by Canon George Salter, then an 87-year old retired Church of Ireland minister, of his family's flight from their farm near Dunmanway after 13 Protestants were killed in April 1922.

Tom Cooper, chairman of the Irish National Congress, which advocates Irish reunification, had originally complained to RTE in 2012 that the film contained inaccuracies.

And, in a letter to *The Southern Star* this week, he welcomed the fact that *An Tost Fada* has been amended to correct 'two of its more glaring errors.'



Mr Cooper said he believes 'the general public deserves better from our national broadcaster, and so, too, do those attending the West Cork History Festival.

'My advice to those watching in silence the Gregg-Harris RTÉ documentary – take it with a large pinch of salt.'

### ***An Tost Fada* - four Irish Times letters (plus two censored, unpublished)**

#### **IRA spies and West Cork killings**

7 August 2017

Barry Roche noted that, following my complaint, the 2012 Gerry Gregg and Eoghan Harris RTÉ documentary *An Tost Fada* (The Long Silence) was 'corrected for some errors since its first screening' (Home News, July 31<sup>st</sup>). The programme was re-edited for the recent West Cork History Festival, after I alerted RTÉ of the intention to screen it.

RTÉ admitted to two errors. In one, the programme got the date wrong in relation to the killing of two Protestant farmers by a factor of 14 months.

The significance of the date of the killings is crucial. Gregg and Harris claim the killings took place in April 1922, when the War of Independence was over, implying that the killings were sectarian, when in fact they had taken place in February 1921, at the height of the war.

Images were screened from the graveyard in which the two men, Mathew Sweetnam and William Connell, were laid to rest.

It puzzled me as to how the mistake occurred, particularly as the camera lingered over the gravestone surname of one of the victims, Mathew Sweetnam. The puzzle was resolved last week when I examined some West Cork Graveyard Database, Aughadown burial ground, photographs.

The *An Tost Fada* camera shots were not of Mathew Sweetnam's grave. They were of a Minnie Sweetnam's gravestone. She was laid to rest in April 1939.

Barry Roche reported Eoghan Harris stating that Irish Protestants 'must feel free to talk about their past'. So they must. And we all must listen.

A good start would be if alleged professional communicators who purport to assist them left their personal agendas at the door. They should check evidence thoroughly. It is time-consuming but rewarding.

I suggested to RTÉ that they should reintroduce historical advisers for such programmes. The value of considered judgments is evident in Barry Roche's report of Andy Bielenberg's festival talk.

Bielenberg's research, as distinct from Mr Harris's imagination, suggested an absence of republican sectarianism during the course of the War of Independence.

TOM COOPER, DUBLIN

#### **IRA intimidation in west Cork**

8 August 2017

For five years now Tom Cooper (Letters, August 7<sup>th</sup>) has been sending petty niggling letters to national newspapers seeking to tarnish *An Tost Fada*, the personal film testimony of Canon George Salter.

Canon Salter told a sad but redemptive story: how in



**GRAVE ROBBERING** This, top, is the gravestone of Minnie Sweetnam, who died on 9 April 1939. *An Tost Fada* misrepresented it as that of Mathew Sweetnam (see programme stills above). That is not all. Eoghan Harris said the IRA killed Mathew Sweetnam for sectarian reasons in April 1922. The IRA in fact killed him during the War of Independence in February 1921, for giving court evidence against the IRA. This is but one example of the programme's irresponsible and unprofessional approach.

April 1921, the IRA intimidated his father and mother to leave their family farm near Dunmanway at a few hours notice – but how they later returned to west Cork and resumed farming.

Tom Cooper's substantive complaint about alleged bias in *An Tost Fada* was rejected by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland in October 2012. He then resorted to a nitpicking letters campaign, first about minor slips of memory by the then 87-year-old Canon – which had no bearing on the burden of his story – and has now moved on to gravestones.

GERRY GREGG, PRAXIS PICTURES

#### **When facts don't fit, try fiction** (not published)

8 August 2017

Gerry Gregg consistently deflects mistakes in the *An Tost Fada* documentary on to Canon George Salter, as though the argument was with him (letters, August 8<sup>th</sup>). It is not. It is with producer Gerry Gregg and with scriptwriter/narrator Eoghan Harris. They did their subject and the public a disservice by not properly researching the period of which the Canon spoke, some years before he was born.

The programme makers promoted a story of sectarian



persecution at the expense of details that could not sustain it. Filming the wrong gravestone, getting the date wrong on when people were killed by a factor of 14 months, getting compensation amounts wrong and off by a factor of six years, were symptomatic of their approach. It was as though a higher 'truth' should not burden itself with the grubby stain of evidence.

The incompetence of the effort is demonstrated by the existence of a compensation file never read and of ignored newspaper coverage of the events described. Consulting these would have corrected mistakes and would have forced the programme makers to tell a richer, more contextualised, story.

Mr Gregg failed to acknowledge that RTE upheld two complaints. The remainder were then sent to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. Contrary to Mr Gregg's assertion, the BAI failed to consider them. In an eccentric and not to be repeated response, that surprised RTÉ, the BAI determined that the programme 'did not have to comply with ... statutory requirements for fairness, objectivity and impartiality'.

Oral histories are a valuable resource, cross-checked with other, including other oral, sources. In the case of the departure of William Salter from his farm in 1922, Canon Salter's is not the only one. Robert Salter Townsend tells the story differently again on the 'Irish Life and Lore' website. William Salter, who did the departing in 1922, contradicts both oral accounts in his 1928 compensation application to the British government, as a formerly persecuted loyalist.

Gerry Gregg calls my approach 'nitpicking'. If not prepared to painstakingly comb through the detail of history to present a factual account, he should try another method. It is called fiction.

TOM COOPER, DUBLIN

### West Cork history revisited

9 August 2017

I am grateful for the excellent and balanced reporting by your Southern Correspondent Barry Roche of the inaugural West Cork History Festival. I am glad Tom Cooper (Letters, August 7<sup>th</sup>) has read some of it. As he was not present himself, he will perhaps permit me to correct somewhat the impression he creates of the festival.

A screening of *An Tost Fada*, which did not contain the images to which Mr Cooper refers, played to a packed house. Canon Salter, on whose moving testimony about his family's experience during and after the War of Independence the documentary is based, was present. It prompted animated discussion and proved thought-provoking for those who attended. The same was true of the other contributions on the revolutionary period. Academic speakers included Dr Andy Bielenberg, whom Mr Cooper mentions, but also Dr Eve Morrison, Prof David Fitzpatrick, Prof Eunan O'Halpin, and Dr William Sheehan. All produced debate; none claimed the final word.

The issues involved, including that of sectarianism in the revolutionary period, will no doubt continue to exercise those engaged in honest scrutiny of the time. We look forward to continuing to play our part in that, as well as

considering the host of other subjects which interested those from west Cork and elsewhere who were present.

SIMON KINGSTON

CHAIR WEST CORK HISTORY FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

### Sectarianism in West Cork after the truce

12 August 2017

Tom Cooper's letter (August 7<sup>th</sup>) merits a response. Unfortunately, previous arrangements prevented my attending the West Cork History Festival in Skibbereen, where this issue could have been 'put to bed'. It has taken me the past three days to isolate the information that is here published for the first time.

Pace my two friends Dr Andy Bielenberg of the school of history at University College Cork and Prof James Donnelly of the University of Wisconsin; but, as they both know (and Prof Bielenberg has supported) my wife and I have been working for the past six years on a document in the British National Archives, CO 762 (Irish Claims Commission in its various forms). We have 16,000 photographs of the documents and a database which includes a precis of each complaint. I have read every one of them and written that summary.

Briefly, CO 762 was set up to help Protestants, Loyalists and ex-servants of the (British) government who were getting 'a hard time' from the patriots in the aftermath of the truce (July 11th, 1921).

In total, there are 3,632 claims. Of those, 850 relate to Co Cork (23 per cent – by a long way the largest number per county). Of those, 458 relate to the Bandon and Lee (west of Ovens) valleys and the west Cork coast to Castletown bere. 12.6 per cent for the least populous part of the county!

Of that 458, I have managed (with the aid of the 1911 Census) to identify one Brethren (Plymouth?), 27 Methodists, two Presbyterians and 294 Church of Ireland (70 per cent) and, I believe that there are many more of the unidentified people who moved out of the area who would also prove to be non-Roman Catholic.

To ask us to believe that there was no sectarianism in west Cork (killings or otherwise) flies in the face of the evidence.

CAL HYLAND, CORK

### Response to three *Irish Times* letters (not published)

13 August 2017

My August 7<sup>th</sup> letter merited three critical responses.

Taking the last first, Cal Hyland (August 12<sup>th</sup>) reported the religious denomination of Cork loyalists applying for compensation to the British government. The memoir of former *Irish Times* journalist Lionel Fleming, *Head or Harp* (1965), dismissed 'anti-Irish propaganda' in right wing London newspapers during the 1920s and 1930s, based on the allegedly sad fate of southern loyalists. Fleming, son of the West Cork Rector of Timoleague, noted that the campaign culminated in the awarding of generous compensation amounts.

Mr Hyland's photographs are of claims stating that they paid an arms levy to the IRA and that they accommodated and fed groups of IRA personnel. Some, suspected of aiding Crown Forces, said they were ordered to leave. These

predations were not peculiar to Protestants. They may have affected Protestants in West Cork disproportionately for two reasons.

First, due to the sectarian nature of British rule, Protestants were relatively more affluent than their Roman Catholic neighbours and therefore paid more. Second, some Protestants in West Cork (like some Roman Catholics) actively sided with the British status quo. Others were disgusted with British methods and said so. Some others were with republican forces. The official British Army history, *The Record of the Rebellion*, noted that some West Cork Protestants, unlike Protestants elsewhere, gave information.

No one is asked, 'to believe that there was no sectarianism in west Cork'. There was and the republican campaign was designed to end it.

Simon Kingston (August 9th) referred to sectarianism '[continuing] to exercise those engaged in honest scrutiny' of the period. He might tell us who this remark excludes. A debate surrounds the controversial methods of the late Peter Hart. Perhaps there is a connection.

He is correct: images I complained of did not feature in the *An Tost Fada* screening at the West Cork History Festival. Simon Kingston knows that is because I complained and RTE removed the images plus some audio.

Finally, *Tost Fada* producer Gerry Gregg accuses me of 'nit picking' his programme (8<sup>th</sup> August). If he is not prepared to painstakingly comb through the detail of history to present a factual account, he should try another method, called fiction.

I pointed out that Gregg and scriptwriter Eoghan Harris presented inaccurate information in relation to compensation paid to a William Salter and that the programme conflated over two days events 14 months apart. If the programme makers had examined Mr Salter's loyalist compensation application, mistakes could have been avoided. But that might have upset the programme makers' message, similar to the one Lionel Fleming complained of in his memoir.

TOM COOPER, DUBLIN

### ***Southern Star* Fifteen letters on Peter Hart and the Kilmichael Ambush,**

#### **Misidentification of Old IRA veteran**

11 June 2017

I would like to address some of the comments made by Tom Cooper in his recent letter (May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

The 'unidentified scout' Hart interviewed on November 19th, 1989 was Willie Chambers, Teadies, Enniskeane. The oft-repeated assertion that Peter Hart claimed to have interviewed a Kilmichael veteran who was already dead (Ned Young, d. November 13th, 1989) is based on a misidentification by Hart's critics of the Old IRA veteran concerned.

Hart did interview Ned Young, but on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1988. Chambers was a friend of Young's and a long-standing member of the Kilmichael Commemoration Committee. Chambers' son, Liam, confirmed to me that his

father always said he had been an unarmed, secondary scout at the Enniskeane Bridge during the Kilmichael ambush. Liam is unable to confirm or deny what his father told Hart, but his Military Service Pension file might shed further light.

I would like to encourage those in possession of other IRA veteran recorded interviews Hart used to come forward as well.

As an historian, I strive to take into account all available records, and to be as objective and dispassionate as possible in my judgements.

I would appreciate it if Mr Cooper (and anyone else) would refrain from associating my work with either Kevin Myers or Eoghan Harris, or assume in any way that my historical or political views are in accord with theirs.

EVE MORRISON, TRINITY COLLEGE

#### **Identification of IRA veteran interesting**

18 June 2017

Eve Morrison's identification of an IRA veteran, interviewed anonymously by the late Peter Hart about the November 1920 Kilmichael Ambush, is of great interest (Letters, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

Controversy arose because the interview was dated six days after the last known Kilmichael veteran, Ned Young, died on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1989. The discrepancy was first noted in Meda Ryan's 2003 biography, *Tom Barry, IRA Freedom Fighter*, on the ambush commander.

In 2008, I pointed out that Hart's mysterious interviewee was presented as an ambush participant in Hart's 1992 PhD thesis. He became an unarmed 'scout' in Hart's 1998 book, *The IRA and its Enemies*. He was identified in the thesis as touring Hart around the ambush site, a claim the book withdrew.

I indicated also a problem with words attributed by Hart to this interviewee. In 2012 Eve Morrison confirmed he did not utter them.

Eve Morrison now states that IRA veteran William Chambers is the individual in question. He confirmed to his son that he was, 'an unarmed, secondary scout at Enniskeane Bridge during the Kilmichael ambush.'

In that case, Hart seems to have put further words into this man's mouth. Hart cited him saying, 'he saw several (British) Auxiliaries surrender' during the fighting 'and then heard further firing, some of which came from the Englishmen' (Hart, 1998, p35).

Eve Morrison will surely concur that such an audiovisual feat is not possible on a bridge at Enniskeane, approximately 15km from the ambush location.

In 2012 in the edited collection *Terror in Ireland*, Eve Morrison suggested that Hart's errors resulted from muddle and not misrepresentation. I tend toward the latter view, explained in 'Examining Peter Hart' (*Field Day Review* 10, 2014).

Peter Hart claimed that ambush commander Tom Barry was a vainglorious serial killer, who falsely stated that IRA casualties at Kilmichael were caused by an Auxiliary false surrender.

Had he named his interviewees, Hart's claims would not have been possible.

Hart made further claims with regard to IRA

sectarianism. Unfortunately, in what seems to have been a pattern, he censored and misrepresented archival sources in making them.

It is possible to believe what Peter Hart asserted, but his research is not a reliable support. In effect, his muddle appears to have been his method.

I echo Eve Morrison's call that relatives with veteran interviews and other archival material should make them available, I suggest to a public archive.

In Munster, UCC's History Department is one logical place for hosting such material. It may then be evaluated equally by all scholars and other interested members of the public.

NIALL MEEHAN, GRIFFITH COLLEGE

### Discrepancies about Kilmichael Ambush

24 June 2017

Niall Meehan's letter (June 17<sup>th</sup>) distracts from core issues relating to Hart's interviews.

In my 2012 chapter in *Terror in Ireland*, I identified all the Kilmichael veterans interviewed by Hart or by Father John Chisholm bar one, the 'unarmed scout'. I subsequently discovered that the only two anonymous quotes I couldn't identify at the time were from Hart's interview with Willie Chambers (November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1989), whom I then realised was the unarmed scout.

Meehan's contributions to the Hart interview controversy are characterised by misstatements of fact as well as of interpretation. To give one example from your own newspaper, in July 2008 you published Meehan's assertion that the late Jim O'Driscoll, SC, was 'one of the signatories' to John Young's affidavit claiming Hart could not have interviewed Ned Young, his father.

O'Driscoll's *Irish Times* obituary in 2009 repeated this erroneous claim based on 'internet sources'. In reality, O'Driscoll had merely witnessed Young's signature, and had not endorsed Young's claims.

Marion O'Driscoll confirmed that her husband had introduced Hart to Ned Young and, contrary to what was being said, had flatly refused to attack Hart when asked to do so. In 2013, she and I wrote a letter to History Ireland (published online) requesting, in the strongest terms, that people stop associating Jim O'Driscoll with these allegations against Hart.

Hart used Willie Chambers' interview in good faith. Witness accounts collected decades after the events discussed in them often contain inconsistencies. For example, in 1973 Meda Ryan's interviewee Dan Hourihan said he witnessed the 'false surrender.' Yet in December 1937, he told the Military Service Pension board that, as the column moved into position, Tom Barry ordered him to return to his area to arrange billets in Ballinacarriga, which is even farther from the ambush site than Enniskeane Bridge.

There may be perfectly reasonable explanations for the discrepancies in the cases of both Hourihan and Chambers. All we can do is wait for more evidence to emerge.

In the meantime, Ryan should release her Kilmichael interviews, and Meehan should make more effort to get his own facts right.

EVE MORRISON, TRINITY COLLEGE

### Jumping to Kilmichael Ambush conclusions

8 July 2017

Eve Morrison has written another interesting letter (24<sup>th</sup> June) on the 28 November 1920 Kilmichael Ambush.

Peter Hart claimed in *The IRA and its Enemies* (1998) that Ambush Commander Tom Barry lied about a British Auxiliary false surrender, causing two of three IRA casualties. Barry justified killing all of the Auxiliaries in a fight to the finish, disregarding further surrender calls.

Hart's view was partly based on anonymous interviews with two surviving ambush participants.

One of the two was a 'scout' interviewed by Hart six days after the last Kilmichael Ambush participant died.

One day before, 18 November 1989, the *Southern Star* headlined, 'Ned Young, last of the Boys of Kilmichael'.

In 1995 ambush participants (including scouts) were carefully and exhaustively tabulated in the Ballineen and Enniskeane Heritage Society's, *The Wild Heather Glen, the Kilmichael Story of Grief and Glory*. Ned Young was the 'last boy' in that publication too.

Hart's acknowledgement that 'a profile of every man at the ambush' was included, excluded his 19 November 1989 'scout' interview.

As the interviewee was not a 'scout' in Hart's 1992 PhD thesis, it is possible that the *Wild Heather Glen* caused Hart to re-designate him for his 1998 book.

Eve Morrison wrote on June 10<sup>th</sup> that the 'scout' was William Chambers. On June 17<sup>th</sup> I outlined why this identification is shaky. She has acknowledged a discrepancy.

There is another reason.

In Hart's 1992 PhD thesis his interviewees were identified by their actual initials (sometimes reversed). Edward 'Ned' Young was 'EY'. Others, like Dan Cahalane ('CD') and John L. O'Sullivan ('JS'), were identified similarly. The 19<sup>th</sup> November 1989 mystery man was 'HJ', which does not approximate to William Chambers.

Hart cited 'HJ' (in a footnote) on what he saw and heard at the ambush. At that time Chambers said he was 15 kilometres away.

As Hart claimed 13 anonymous interviews for his book (12 for the thesis), he may indeed have spoken to William Chambers. Is Eve Morrison sure Chambers is not an additional veteran cited by Hart?

My *Field Day Review* essay, 'Examining Peter Hart' (2014), suggested that the mystery interviewee's words could have been paraphrased from ambush rifleman Jack Hennessy's War of Independence witness statement. Hennessy died in 1970. Unlike Eve Morrison, I am not claiming certainty.

Eve Morrison is right: more evidence would be helpful. So would not jumping to conclusions.

Eve Morrison brought up new matters in her letter. Though they do not relate to the 'scout', I will address them.

She asked that a person she named should not be associated with this debate. I happily comply.

She discussed Hart's second claimed interviewee. I pointed out in *Troubled History* (2008) he was Ned Young,



as Ms Morrison confirmed in 2012.

Hart claimed also to have heard three additional anonymous taped interviews with Kilmichael participants, recorded in the late 1960s (the 'Chisholm tapes'). In 2012 Ms Morrison pointed out that there were two and that one was with Ned Young. The second was with Jack O'Sullivan, who died in December 1986.

Hart's claim of five anonymous ambush witnesses, in total, is therefore reduced to three (including the mystery 'scout').

Two questions arise. Why would Hart have interviewed Ned Young again in 1988? Why misleadingly count him twice?

Does Eve Morrison view Hart's double and miscounting as muddle or method?

It is possible that Hart met Ned Young, a 96-year-old man who suffered a debilitating stroke in 1997. His interview claim, in the ordinary sense of that word, is questionable.

Ned Young's son and carer, John, stated that Hart could not have 'interviewed' his father.

Hart's main text nowhere asked his interviewees, 'Was there a false surrender?' Also, no individual word, phrase or sentence from Ned Young is cited in Hart's Kilmichael Ambush chapter.

Young did make two statements affirming a false surrender on the 'Chisholm tapes', but Hart did not report them.

That is curious.

I again make the point that Hart's anonymous presentation caused these problems. Whatever people choose to believe about the Kilmichael Ambush, Hart's research is not a reliable guide.

It is a pity that West Cork's first history festival is not debating contentious subject matter derived from Hart, on which so many of its presenters appear to rely for their views.

NIALL MEEHAN, GRIFFITH COLLEGE

### **Young neither saw nor heard false surrender**

15 July 2017

What a pity Niall Meehan cannot face the facts (July 8<sup>th</sup>). His long-winded litany of false logic and obscure reasoning is hard to follow even for someone well versed in the Kilmichael-Hart debate.

For brevity's sake, here I will correct just one of his misstatements. Meehan claims that the late Ned Young made 'two statements affirming a false surrender' to Fr John Chisholm in 1969. This is absurd. What Young 'affirms' in Chisholm's interview (below) is that he neither saw nor heard a false surrender:

YOUNG: I saw Barry coming up the road to, calling for Volunteers to come up to fight the second lorry. Then when I went down the road somebody called me. 'Young come up off of the road or you'll be shot!' When then, 'tis then I found out that McCarthy had been shot, and Deasy.

CHISHOLM: Yeah, and the fighting was going on?

YOUNG: And the fighting was stopped ...

CHISHOLM: It was stopped now?

YOUNG: It was. Before that I saw [John] Lordan coming out. When I was going down the road, I saw Lordan coming out and hitting this Tan.

CHISHOLM: Had he surrendered?

YOUNG: He had.

CHISHOLM: Surrendered?

YOUNG: Surrendered.

CHISHOLM: Yeah. Was there another man who surrendered too? Another Auxiliary?

YOUNG: Except in the first lorry, I don't know.

CHISHOLM: No, but there were only two who surrendered from the second lorry so far as you know?

YOUNG: That is all.

CHISHOLM: The man who surrendered to you and then the man that surrendered there when Lordan hit him with the ...

YOUNG: Yes, but they told me afterwards that they said that the Tans said 'We surrender' and then started to fire again, but I didn't hear that portion of it.

CHISHOLM: No. You didn't hear any cry of surrender?

YOUNG: I didn't.

CHISHOLM: No. That was what you heard afterwards.

YOUNG: That was what I heard afterwards.

CHISHOLM: Can you remember who told you that? Did Lordan tell you?

YOUNG: No, he didn't. I don't know who said it.

CHISHOLM: You don't remember who said it?

YOUNG: I don't remember who said it.

Young says only that at some point afterwards other (unnamed) members of the column told him it happened. No-one, not Hart, not anyone, ever disputed that some Kilmichael veterans said this. The point is that neither the Young nor the Jack O'Sullivan Chisholm interviews support Tom Barry's version of events on a whole range of issues.

Meehan's hocus pocus is clearly intended to draw attention away from what is now obvious. Hart interviewed everyone he said he did, and Meda Ryan's Kilmichael account (which Meehan accepts) contains more – and more serious – errors than Hart's.

Over the nearly twenty years of Meehan's smear campaign against Hart, he has never once called on Ryan to release her interviews.

If he is interested in the truth, he will now.

EVE MORRISON, TRINITY COLLEGE

### **Introducing further errors to the debate**

15 July 2017

As Niall Meehan states, Dr Eve Morrison's letter (June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017) identifying William Chambers as the 'unidentified scout' interviewed by the late Peter Hart is a significant addition to the Kilmichael ambush debate. However, Ms Morrison does not provide the evidence that has led her to this conclusion.

Crucially, Hart (p33) said that this man was HJ, who gave him a tour of the ambush site and who stated 'Barry made us. He shot one, then we shot one' when allegedly killing surrendered and wounded auxiliaries. HJ is the rock upon which Hart's argument is built.

Yet, if Willie Chambers was at Enniskeane, then he

could not witness Tom Barry doing anything at the ambush site 15 kilometres away. Is Ms Morrison now saying that Willie Chambers is HJ and, if she is, where does that leave Hart? If I'm confused, despite having reconstructed the ambush in detail in my latest book, *Cork's Revolutionary Dead 1916-1923*, I cannot imagine where this leaves everyone else.

Secondly, in her reply to Niall Meehan (June 24th) she claims Daniel Hourihan said that Tom Barry had sent him away from the column to organise billets for the Flying Column on the day of Kilmichael in his 1937 Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC).

While it is true he says that he was 'sent away from the column for short periods' in his statement Ms Morrison is not correct.

In his follow-up interview with the MSPC, he says 'At Kilmichael, I was sent for to reinforce the col [.....] the morning of the fight.' There is, and never was, any doubt that Hourihan fought at Kilmichael and he never said otherwise.

Unlike many of the other commentators on this topic, I have long believed that Peter Hart's 28-year-old work has been superseded, but I am certain that Eve Morrison would not wish to introduce further errors to the debate.

BARRY KEANE, CORK.

### **False surrender at Kilmichael?**

22 July 2017

Eve Morrison seems to have abandoned identifying William Chambers as the mystery man Peter Hart interviewed six days after Ned Young, the last Kilmichael Ambush participant, died (letters, July 15<sup>th</sup>).

She has instead criticised my literary style, expressed in too many words. I understand why from her viewpoint none would be preferable.

Alas, Eve Morrison's attempt to refute my assertion that Ned Young twice affirmed a false surrender at Kilmichael, on the Chisholm tapes, is refuted by her repetition of Young's affirmation: 'They (other Kilmichael volunteers) told me afterwards that they said that the Tans said "We surrender" and then started to fire again.'

Eve Morrison might criticise herself for contributing in 2012: 'Young told (the late Fr John) Chisholm that he had seen (John) Lordan bayonet an Auxiliary, and that after the ambush members of the column had informed him that this Auxiliary had surrendered falsely.'

I am aware that Young did not personally witness the false surrender. His Bureau of Military Witness Statement records him pursuing an escaping Auxiliary, while the main fighting was proceeding.

Morrison should consider this: IRA volunteers who spoke to Young affirmed and witnessed a false surrender. In these circumstances, it is hard to see what ambush commander Tom Barry got wrong in *Guerilla Days in Ireland*. Is Morrison implying that participants started lying to each other when the fighting stopped?

To repeat, Young twice affirmed a false surrender at Kilmichael on the Chisholm tapes. Peter Hart did not report that once in *The IRA and its Enemies*.

I am pleased that, as part of this discussion, Eve Morrison has revealed more of Ned Young's Chisholm tapes transcript. If the editor forbears, Eve Morrison may eventually eke out the lot. I published Jack O'Sullivan's Kilmichael portion in 'Examining Peter Hart' (2014).

I hope that explanation is succinct and clear. I decline Eve Morrison's suggestion that I pick a fight with Meda Ryan. I admire Ryan's work as a historian too much to take up the offer. I like Barry Keane's research too, and welcome his intervention last week also.

It is unfortunate that the West Cork History Festival has ignored impressive local talent, represented by Keane and Ryan, in favour of imported, less well-informed, speakers.

NIALL MEEHAN, GRIFFITH COLLEGE

### **Whereabouts of a Kilmichael veteran**

27 July 2017

The recent exchange of letters concerning different accounts of the whereabouts of a Kilmichael veteran, Dan Hourihan, at the actual time of the ambush is interesting. The debate might perhaps be extended to include his whereabouts during the rest of the War of Independence as well.

In a 1973 interview with Meda Ryan, Dan Hourihan related how he had gone on the run after Kilmichael and been captured by the British. He told her he was imprisoned on Spike Island, where he was beaten and tortured to the extent of losing fingernails, toenails and part of a finger. Details of the interview are on pages 66 and 67 of Meda Ryan's book *Tom Barry IRA Freedom Fighter* 2005 edition.

However, there is no such story of capture and torture in the records of his 1935 military pension application. In this version of events, Hourihan remained at liberty throughout the war.

He acted as Dunmanway Battalion Quarter Master continuously from early December 1920 until after the truce of July 1921.

He participated in many of the IRA engagements in the area against the British right up until the truce.

The only reference to any imprisonment in Hourihan's pension application is of a period of internment during the civil war after capture by Free State forces in late 1922. Both in his initial pension application and in his later unsuccessful claim to the military pensions board for a special allowance, he confirmed that he had never applied for or been granted a disability or wound allowance.

Of his two very conflicting accounts, I am inclined to believe Hourihan's pension application version of his war. It was subjected to scrutiny by the pensions board. Hourihan had listed Tom Barry, Liam Deasy, Paddy O'Brien and others as referees who could confirm his account. Paddy O'Brien did indeed confirm the details.

Being captured and tortured by the British would surely have enhanced his pension claim and award. So why would he leave it out?

Given Dan Hourihan's own apparent confusion about how his time was occupied during the war of independence, it is little wonder there are arguments almost a century later about where he might have been at any particular time,

DONALD WOOD, ENGLAND

## Was Dan Hourihan at Kilmichael Ambush?

27 July 2017

Barry Keane (July 15<sup>th</sup>) is the one introducing further errors into this debate. I wish he had read Dan Hourihan's MSP application more carefully. In his testimony before the pensions board, March 5th, 1935, Hourihan did state that:

'At Kilmichael, I was sent for to reinforce the Col the morning of the fight. I was Company Captain. I was ready to prepare for the retreat.'

However, if Keane had read on a bit further he would have noted that on p5 of his appeal, December 8th, 1937, Hourihan described his activities in more detail:

'On the eve of (the) Kilmichael ambush I got a despatch for five armed men to report at Column HQ that night which I did. As (the) Column were moving into positions. I was called out by Tom Barry Column O/C to return to my coy area and make preparations for (the) Column he having decided to return to my area that night. (The) Column arrived at 12 that night and I had everything in order before it.'

This suggests Hourihan did not take part in the actual fight. The application is freely available online so people can check for themselves. In 1973, however, Hourihan apparently told Meda Ryan he fought at Kilmichael and witnessed a false surrender by the Auxiliaries.

Likewise, Willie Chambers told his son he was a scout at the Enniskeane Bridge during the ambush. Yet the late Peter Hart's interview notes indicate that he told Hart he witnessed, and perhaps even took part in, executing Auxiliaries after the ambush. As I noted in previous correspondence, these contradictions can only be resolved if more evidence becomes available.

I consulted Hart's Kilmichael interview notes a few years ago. His papers are now in a publicly accessible archive (Peter Hart Collection, Coll-455, Archives and Special Collections, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University, Newfoundland). The MSP records of Chambers and other Kilmichael veterans are due for release.

I have the late Fr Chisholm's Kilmichael interviews and papers, and am currently writing a book about the ambush. Chisholm directed me to give this material to Trinity College Dublin when I felt the time was right. As soon as my book is in press, I'll do that.

Meda Ryan's interviews and Tom Barry's papers should be given to an archive now.

EVE MORRISON, TRINITY COLLEGE

## Why the fixation with Meda Ryan's research?

5 August 2017

Eve Morrison repeats her demand that Meda Ryan, a historian, give her interview notes to a public archive (*Southern Star*, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

Why this fixation on Ryan's research? Should all historians do likewise? Is Morrison's demand a form of quid pro quo for criticism of Peter Hart's use of anonymous interviews and the confusion his doctoral decision (agreed by TCD) produced?

Is it also because of the request that the so-called 'Chisholm tapes', that Peter Hart misreported and censored

in *The IRA and its Enemies*, be placed in a public archive? If so, I would like to explain why Morrison's demand is misconceived.

The recordings in question might perhaps also be termed the 'Deasy tapes'. Liam Deasy made them, with the late Fr John Chisholm's assistance, as research material for Deasy's 1973 book, *Toward Ireland Free*.

Before she died, Liam Deasy's eldest daughter Maureen, who typed the 1973 manuscript, requested in writing, both privately (2009) and publicly (2013) that the tapes be given to UCC.

Maureen Deasy made her request because she thought Chisholm an unreliable custodian. Her concerns were evidentially based.

For example, Fr Chisholm agreed to let TV programme maker Jerry O'Callaghan listen to all eight tapes, as research for the 2011 TG4 documentary *Scéal Tom Barry* ('The Tom Barry Story').

O'Callaghan then attended an October 2011 Eve Morrison talk in TCD, at which some of the Chisholm material was played back. He was surprised to hear, for the first time, Kilmichael veteran Ned Young's voice on one recording. Chisholm, who was there too, said that when he allowed O'Callaghan to listen he had 'lost' and forgotten that ninth tape, but remembered and 'found' the recording when Morrison came looking. Whereas O'Callaghan had to sit and listen, while constructing a transcript, Eve Morrison was fortunate in being given the actual recordings.

Even more surprised by this development was Ned Young's son John, who previously had asked Chisholm for a copy of recordings of his father. Chisholm wrote to John Young in 2008, 'I greatly regret having to inform you that I have no recording of an interview with your father, though I remember him with affection as a man of real character.'

Maureen Deasy observed in *History Ireland* in 2013:

'I am not in good health. It is my fervent wish that Fr Chisholm make a thorough search for all material belonging to my father which he may also have mislaid, and that the material be given to UCC for use by researchers. This scandalous situation has to end and can only end with full disclosure of the tapes and their contents.'

Not unreasonably, in 2012 the UCC historian John Borghonovo suggested that Chisholm had 'polluted this evidential well'. The only rational acceptable solution to the mess Chisholm created was, as Maureen Deasy suggested, that the material be placed in a public archive.

It is a welcome development that Eve Morrison intends, finally, to make this happen, at some future date. TCD is an acceptable choice if access is open (with usual procedures). Since UCC was the last recorded wish of the late Maureen Deasy, perhaps TCD should consider giving UCC copies of the recordings, in the spirit of all modern collaborative research, and in light of UCC's commendable efforts in this context.

Separately, I note that Morrison has not responded to the point that, while Peter Hart may have spoken to him, William Chambers was probably not Peter Hart's mystery interviewee on 19th November 1989 (six days after Ned



Young, the last surviving Kilmichael Ambush participant, died). Not for the first time, Morrison fails to acknowledge something I first noted, that Chambers could not have seen and heard events at the Ambush, that took place 15 kilometres from where he claimed he then stood (on Enniskeane bridge). Since the 19 November 1989 interviewee described what he saw at the ambush, as yet undiscovered evidence can never 'resolve' that particular 'contradiction', despite Morrison's suggestion.

Unless Morrison has definitive undisclosed proof, it is not sensible to declare that Chambers was the mystery man. If proof is to hand, it would demonstrate that Peter Hart's Kilmichael Ambush chapter, in *The IRA and its Enemies*, is a shambles.

NIALL MEEHAN, GRIFFITH COLLEGE

### **Memory of Hourihan has been insulted**

5 August 2017

The tone and content of Eve Morrison's letter (July 27<sup>th</sup>: Was Dan Hourihan at Kilmichael?) is disappointing and insulting. I reconstructed the Kilmichael ambush in Cork's Revolutionary Dead (June 2017) and read through Dan Hourihan's Military Service Pensions Collection file many times. I know exactly what it contains. Far more seriously, she insults the memory of Dan Hourihan whose only 'crime' was to fight an empire that had conquered and denuded a quarter of the globe.

Hourihan fought at Kilmichael. Nobody in the 3rd Brigade, including other Kilmichael veterans, said otherwise. He is named in the first list of participants in December 1938 and in James 'Spud' Murphy's September 1957 list in his Bureau of Military History statement.

In his application, witnessed on 21 February 1935 (P 6), Hourihan states he fought in ten named military actions including Kilmichael. Some of these were later questioned. Kilmichael was not. In an appendix he states that he took part in the 'principal engagements with the 3rd Brigade Flying Column'. He was supported by Liam Deasy and Tom Hales. His sworn evidence to the MSPC referees on 5 March 1935 states he was called up to reinforce the column on the morning of Kilmichael. He was awarded a pension from April 1920 but not before.

On 8 December 1937, Hourihan appealed his award and submitted extra 'evidence which was not available at [his] original hearing'. The MSPC referee agreed the 1937 evidence was 'additional' on 19 December 1940. The Minister for Defence formally directed a review on 21 February 1941. Flor Begley and Paddy O'Brien (a Kilmichael veteran) confirmed some of the additional evidence on 8 August 1942. Dr Morrison's single piece of evidence makes no mention of Hourihan fighting at Kilmichael because this was not 'additional information'. He simply adds to his 1935 evidence that he was there. He was asked by Tom Barry 'on the eve of Kilmichael' to organise and manage the billets at Granure and the scouts. After he fought at Kilmichael he returned to Granure where his company guarded and fed the men. His file shows that he often referred to work he delegated to the 75 strong Ballinacarriga company in the first person so this is not

unusual or unique.

It is easy to fall into the historical pothole created by Hourihan's phrasing. Perhaps this is the case with Dr. Morrison. I hope she is not planning to question his participation in order to dismiss his evidence of a 'false surrender' in Meda Ryan's biography of Tom Barry in yet another tired defence of Peter Hart. If that is the plan, it is a bad one. The entirety of the evidence shows Dan Hourihan fought at Kilmichael. Nobody thought otherwise, including himself, until this letter from Eve Morrison.

BARRY KEANE, CORK

### **Was 'not insulting anyone's memory'**

12 August 2017

In relation to Barry Keane's and Niall Meehan's latest letters (August 5<sup>th</sup>), it should be noted that you published two letters relating to Dan Hourihan last week, by me and by West Cork-born local historian Don Wood, who came to the same conclusions I did, and was more critical.

I am not insulting anyone's memory, and I did not deny that Hourihan took part in the Kilmichael Ambush. He helped prepare for it and was with the column at the ambush site that morning.

Hourihan also unambiguously states that, as the column were taking their positions, he left (under Barry's orders) for Ballinacarriga to organise the withdrawal. He asserted that these activities qualified as taking active part in the ambush, and I agree. However, nowhere in the file does Hourihan or anyone else state that he was involved in the actual fight at Kilmichael.

In fact, in March 1941 the pension board concluded that his 'fighting service' began in the 7th period (April 1st to July 11th, 1921). In their August 1942 response, Paddy O'Brien and other members of the local brigade committee confirmed Hourihan's armed involvement with the flying column from January 1921, and no earlier.

Meda Ryan's account of her 1973 interview, by contrast, suggests that Hourihan took part in the attack at Kilmichael, which is one of the reasons she should release her evidence. As I already stated, Willie Chambers was the scout Peter Hart spoke to in November 1989, and whom Hart cited in his Kilmichael chapter in *The IRA and Its Enemies*. Chambers' son Liam states that his father was a scout at Enniskeane Bridge. This is closer to the ambush site than Ballinacarriga, where Tom Barry sent Hourihan. Hart's interview notes suggest that Chambers witnessed part of the ambush, so he must also have left his position at some point and made his way to the ambush site.

It is perfectly reasonable to ask Ryan to release her interview notes. John Borgonovo and Andy Bielenberg of UCC have also, and quite rightly, made a public call for Tom Barry's papers to be made available. Keane himself has stated that 'All oral history is expected to be deposited in a repository to be accepted as historical documents.'

Using these criteria, how can Ryan's interviews be accepted as evidence until they become publicly accessible? Yet Keane and Niall Meehan employ Ryan's work entirely uncritically, and ignore several serious errors and inconsistencies in her Kilmichael account. Is this not truly

staggering hypocrisy?

According to Meehan, the late Fr John Chisholm's interviews are compromised by his scepticism (because of what veterans told him) about the false surrender. Yet somehow Ryan's unquestioning belief in it is unproblematic.

Chisholm is abused at length for accidentally, temporarily, mislaying one of his tapes, but Ryan deliberately withholding her interviews is acceptable. For Meehan to besmirch Chisholm, who allowed more access to his interviews than anyone else involved in this debate, is outrageous but unfortunately not surprising.

Meehan is fixated with discrediting Hart. He twists and misrepresents every bit of evidence that comes to light and conjures problems out of nothing.

I can only imagine what new conspiracies he will attempt to weave around, for instance, the fact that Hart took his interview notes using two different coloured pens.

Several of Meehan's latest assertions are so wildly inaccurate that I don't see much point in engaging with him anymore. Let's be clear, there was no rift between Chisholm and the Deasy family. Chisholm consulted them about all decisions concerning his (and they were his) interviews.

While it is true that the late Maureen Deasy bombarded him with a series of bizarre letters, the rest of her family had no disagreements with Chisholm.

I aim to make a fair-minded appraisal of all available evidence relating to Kilmichael, including Ryan's interviews (if necessary without access to the originals), using consistent standards. That is what historians do.

EVE MORRISON, TRINITY COLLEGE

### **Insight into Peter Hart's methods**

19 August 2017

I regret that Dr Eve Morrison intends departing from our discussion. It gave readers an insight into the debate on Peter Hart's methods, when he wrote about the War of Independence in West Cork.

Dr Morrison has not pointed to a single pertinent inaccuracy, 'wild' or otherwise, in my four letters to *The Southern Star*. In Morrison's five contributions, the goalposts shifted repeatedly. I followed and answered on each occasion, including on Morrison's unrelenting fixation with successful historian Meda Ryan.

In her latest (August 12<sup>th</sup>) letter, Dr Morrison tells us that, in 2011, the late Fr John Chisholm 'accidentally, temporarily, mislaid one of his tapes.' It contained veteran Ned Young speaking on the Kilmichael Ambush. Since Fr Chisholm possessed two such tapes, his 'forgetting' Young's interview was surprising.

But Fr Chisholm went further. In 2008, he informed Ned Young's son John Young that he did not interview his father, but 'remember(ed) him affectionately as a man of real character.' On the 'mislaid' tape, Young twice referred to his comrades speaking afterwards of a British Auxiliary 'false surrender' at Kilmichael, an event Fr Chisholm dismissed as fiction.

How do we, reasonably, assess Fr Chisholm's behaviour?

Think nothing of it, says Morrison. Raise the subject and

be accused of engaging in 'abuse'. That approach signals an unfortunate return to intemperate language in the Peter Hart debate (with echoes of a more censorious Ireland). Morrison's related traducing of the late Maureen Deasy's attempts at safeguarding her father Liam's tape recordings, in Fr Chisholm's possession, is particularly unwise.

In relation to the Kilmichael Ambush, I remain sceptical of Morrison's speculative attempt to suggest that William Chambers temporarily left his post on Enniskeane bridge, in order to get a better view of a simultaneous 10-minute ambush, 15 kilometres away at Kilmichael, that no one, other than the participants, knew was taking place. William Chambers did not say he went to the ambush in the 'evidence' Eve Morrison originally laid before us.

She said Chambers is the anonymous ambush eyewitness Peter Hart interviewed (with one of his coloured pens?) six days after the last ambush participant, Ned Young, died. Consequently, Morrison has had to move Chambers off the bridge she told us originally he said he was on.

Dr Morrison justifies this approach partly because she extends ambush participation to volunteers who were not there. In her 2012 *Terror in Ireland* contribution, she included the 'previously unknown' Cornelius Kelleher. At home on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1920 Kelleher saw flames in the distance. He set out to find out why.

He discovered on the way that post-ambush burning of British Auxiliary lorries caused them. In this manner, Dr Morrison has assembled some veterans who never claimed to have participated in the Ambush, who she says did.

In attempting to convince us that ambush commander Tom Barry lied about a false surrender at Kilmichael, Peter Hart made many mistakes. One was a clear misreading of Barry, that Fr Chisholm and Eve Morrison shared. I helped Eve Morrison to correct that and other mistakes, some of which she no longer repeats.

I look forward to Morrison's attempt to reconcile all of this in her book. I hope our exchanges have clarified her thoughts. I look forward to reviewing them.

For anyone interested in the background to this discussion, my recently published *The Embers of Revisionism* might supply some food for further thought. Eve Morrison, please note, does not feature.

NIALL MEEHAN, GRIFFITH COLLEGE

### **Discrepancies in number of alleged spies shot by IRA**

20 August 2017

I have carefully followed recent correspondence from Dr Niall Meehan, and Dr Eve Morrison, relating to the work of the late Professor Peter Hart on the Kilmichael ambush. Details about who Peter Hart interviewed, or didn't interview in the late 1980s, are of mind-boggling complexity.

Less confusing, is Dr Andy Bielenberg and Professor James S Donnelly Jr's research on the IRA executions of suspected spies and informers during the War of Independence. Peter Hart wrote in 1998, '...204 civilians were deliberately shot by the IRA in Cork in the course of the revolution (1917-23), the vast majority of whom were

alleged to have been spies or informers' (*IRA and its Enemies*, Oxford, pp 295-6).

So far, Bielenberg and Donnelly's online database confirms between February 20th, 1920 and July 11th, 1921, only 78 suspected spies and informers were executed by the IRA. The difference between Hart's 1998 and Bielenberg's and Donnelly's new figures are neither explained by IRA executions prior to 1920, nor those following July 1921.

Recently, I visited archives in Belfast, Dublin, and Cork. These archives contain data which in 1996, justified claims that nine counties in southern Ireland, including county Cork, experienced something Hart likened to 'ethnic cleansing', and either side of 1922, a 'mass exodus' of southern Protestants. Disparities between the archival evidence, properly counted, and Hart's inflated interpretation of this evidence is measured in tens of thousands.

Surprising many in recent years, professional historians have continued to identify previously unknown IRA 'participants' in the famed Kilmichael ambush – some possibly Hart interviewees. It may be, these historians will now account for all of Hart's alleged spies and informers, alongside tens of thousands of unidentifiable refugees.

JOHN M REGAN, UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

### **Why Auxiliaries were annihilated is dispute**

26 August 2017

The Auxiliaries received no mercy at the end of the Kilmichael ambush on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1920. Even Tom Barry says this. Jack Hennessy, Ned Young and Jack O'Sullivan also mention it. It is not an issue.

The dispute is why the Auxiliaries were annihilated. Tom Barry said it was the result of a false surrender which caused IRA deaths. Various eyewitnesses, including Daniel Hourihan, mention the false surrender. Peter Hart who, it turns out had an undisclosed British Army and Ulster Unionist family background, claimed Barry's version of Kilmichael was 'riddled with lies and evasions.'

Once, I thought highly of Hart's research. Now, I am convinced he 'gilded the lily.'

Dr Morrison supports Hart. Her response to my last letter about Hourihan's participation at Kilmichael is even more disappointing. In 1935, he applied for a pension for active service in the War of Independence. As Dr Morrison knows, the 1934 definition of active service had 'almost exclusively been interpreted as taking part in engagements with the British forces.'

In 1945 the High Court ruled the 1934 standard demanding 'the firing of shots against the enemy or service of an outstanding nature' was too high. Hourihan would not have received a pension for 'organising (IRA) billets' in 1920. It was not active service. Readers can check online files at the Military Service Pensions Collection to confirm this.

Eve Morrison dismisses Dan Hourihan's MSPC statement (p7) that he took part in 'numerous attempts on military, RIC and Tans including one-eyed bridge, Fanlobbus, Kilmichael,' etc. She ignores the first 1938 IRA participants list which includes him; the Irish Press photograph where he is standing next to Ned Young; James 'Spud' Murphy's 1957 BMH

evidence and the 1995 Wild Heather Glen biographical account which states he attended Kilmichael anniversaries until his death in 1974. Instead she claims,

... in March 1941, the pension board concluded that his 'fighting service' began in the 7th period (April 1st to July 11th, 1921).' In their August 1942 response, Paddy O'Brien and other members of the local brigade committee confirmed Hourihan's armed involvement with the flying column from January 1921, and no earlier.

If you only took the pieces of evidence Dr Morrison presents, you can reach the conclusion she has. However, there are difficulties.

First, Dr Morrison might quote where Dan Hourihan says categorically in the MSPC that he did not fight at Kilmichael. Second, she might quote where anyone else says this. Pages 30-31 show he was granted a pension under the 1934 'shooting' rules. He received two-thirds of a year for the 6th period (April 1920 to March 1921).

In 1937, he appealed for additional service (p46) in the 6th period and the 8th (late 1921 to June 30th, 1922). In March 1941, the MSPC referee states that Hourihan's military service 'would appear to have begun about the 7th period' (p46). This is a lot less certain than Dr Morrison's claim, yet he still grants half a year pension entitlement for 1920. That is, he reduced the two-third year award from July 1920 to September.

After this, in 1942, he specifically asks Paddy O'Brien and his colleagues (p49) 'if it is to be understood that this applicant had no other actual armed engagement from January 1921 to July 11th, 1921'. They reply to that specific question on page 51. Why would they comment on 1920?

Finally, on 9/11/1942 the referee grants a pension of 5 and 1/11 years' service starting in the 6th period, which includes Kilmichael (p60).

Dr Morrison might also explain why Liam Deasy's *Towards Ireland Free*, edited by Fr John Chisholm, states (p172 in the 1973 edition) that after Pat Deasy had been taken to Buttimer's, where he died at 10pm on November 28th, 'Dan Hourihan, went ahead to make final arrangements for billeting the men. He made good time and... had everything in order' when the rest of the column reached Granure at 11pm that night. If he was in Granure already, as Dr Morrison claims, why did he need to make good time to get there?

These controversies only add confusion to a simple story. Dr Morrison is entitled to flag difficulties in Hourihan's 1973 interview with Meda Ryan. However, is she entitled to say Dan Hourihan did not fight at Kilmichael?

The evidence does not point in that direction, but as always, readers can decide for themselves.

BARRY KEANE, CORK

Followed by, **'Editor's Note: As all the parties involved have had their say, the correspondence on this matter is now closed'.**



# Meda Ryan response to Eve Morrison, 2014 *History Ireland* letter

In her review of Barry Keane's *Massacre In West Cork* (HI 22.3, May/June 2014), Eve Morrison is critical of my use of documents left behind in 1922 by departing Auxiliaries in Dunmanway Workhouse. She questions whether I had 'actually seen them'. I stated publically in a 2011 TG4 Documentary, *Scéal Tom Barry*, that I had.

In 1981, while researching a short commissioned Mercier Press biography of Tom Barry, I interviewed former flying column volunteer, Dan Cahalane. I want to stress that in my work, I had already built *a trust* with people – this is important. In the course of an interview with Cahalane, he showed me the documents he had received on loan. He studied them carefully and was able to pinpoint names plus details regarding the 13 men killed between 26-29 April 1922. During the course of interview/discussion he constantly referred to the named 'helpful citizens' as 'loyalist'. Religion was not a factor for him in discussing the many named people. However, being from the locality, it was possible for me to discern religious denomination (sometimes mentioned) and families known to me.

Tom Barry's *Guerilla Days in Ireland* drew a distinction between 'spies' and 'informers'. He reported, 'we knew men were being sold'. 'Spies', he noted, 'took blood money'. 'Loyalist informers' were far more dangerous than the spy – they weren't doing it for money', they 'hated the Republican movement' and were 'therefore worse'. He always stressed that 'Loyalism' was not confined to a particular Christian denomination.

I did not use the information in my first short Barry biography. However, after the introduction of the IRA sectarianism argument in Peter Hart's *The IRA & Its Enemies* (1998), I felt motivated to use relevant material in *Tom Barry IRA Freedom Fighter* (2003). Hart wrote: (a) of the IRA targeting Protestants because of their religion during the War of Independence; (b) 'These men were shot because they were Protestant', regarding the April 1922 killings.

As well as other details, in *Tom Barry: IRA Freedom Fighter* I wrote, 'In the course of my extensive interviews over the years with ex-IRA participants of the period I did not hear of "ethnic cleansing" and "ethnic conflict" as Hart wrote'.

It is important to note that there was a Truce in April 1922 – sometimes uneasily observed. In the absence of policing and an acceptable functioning court system, this was broken many times in areas of Ireland. Law and order had receded. However, most of the IRA and its leadership observed Truce terms.

Regarding the April 1922 incidents, my book mentioned the names/surnames of the men who were killed because Peter Hart had named them. I found that chapter personally difficult to write. To reiterate the point, I was from the area. I do not know what has become of the documents. Dan

Cahalane did not tell me to whom he was returning the material. Flor Crowley, I understood, also had them on loan. After the publication of my book in 2003, when a controversy arose, I tried to locate the 'Dunmanway Find' and so far have failed.

I have written that some of the men who were killed during that period were discussed in correspondence between Risteárd Ó Glaisne and Tom Barry in 1949. Ó Glaisne wrote that he was only 'acquainted with the "over-ground"', and appreciated getting "the whole truth" from Barry. They discussed attitudes among some "loyalists" at the time. No other details were in Barry's private papers other than Ó Glaisne's correspondence, which I reported. However, I am informed by Niall Meehan that a subsequent letter from Barry to Ó Glaisne is in the latter's papers – that does not discuss the April killings.

As I had Barry's papers on loan I returned them once my work was completed. I do not know who refused Morrison 'access' (as she does not say), but I have no control over those private papers.

With regard to Morrison's reference to my use of private collections and personal interviews, I feel fortunate that many families *trust* and have *trusted* me, to give me their private collections on loan, which I always return. I hold my personal interviews, as many historians do. Fortunately, most of my interviews have been with active participants (primary sources) in an important period in Irish history. I use them prudently for on-going research and writing.

It is unknown exactly who carried out the April killings and I won't speculate. The West Cork IRA leadership wished to maintain Truce terms and were in Dublin at the time endeavouring to ward off civil war. Upon return, they initiated 'guards' on the homes of those thought vulnerable. Former flying column volunteer, Jim Kearney wrote to me, (quoted 2003), 'I was one of the guards, so I should know'. AJS Stephen Brady's father was a Rector; in his memoir *Briar of Life*, Brady confirmed 'guards' outside their Macroom home at that period. Professor John A. Murphy later stated that his father guarded the Rector's home.

At this stage I do not wish to continue this controversy. Like most people in West Cork, I have no desire or intention of adding to any distress for any family. As I wrote in *Tom Barry: IRA Freedom Fighter*, 'After hostilities ceased, Republicans in West Cork took a decision not to expose the names of known spies or of Loyalists informers within the community. This decision was taken to protect relatives and also to preserve neighbourly stability. Family members were generally unaware of the underground activities their relatives were engaged in and for harmony in the area Republicans aided this protectionist policy of nondisclosure.'

***History Ireland* published this letter online in 2014.**

I hope that in the interests of fair play and our right of reply you will reconsider your decision and publish our letter.

# Peter Hart's bogus ethnic cleansing statistics exposed by Dundee historian, Dr. John Regan

By Dr. Pat Muldowney

Ian McBride is the new 'Foster Professor of Irish History' in Hertford College, Oxford. In 2016 he stepped into the retired shoes of Roy Foster, whose legacy lives on in new boots.

The first Foster-professorial action of the incumbent was to issue a stirring defence of Peter Hart in the Cambridge University Press journal *History*, entitled 'The Peter Hart affair: history, ideology, and the Irish Revolution' (2017).

Well, not so much stirring as a plaintive lament over academic historians' loss of authority:

These [public cultural developments, in which many more people now take an interest in their own history] involve a kind of de-professionalization of historical knowledge – or, at least, a renegotiation of the relationship between the professional historian and the public.

The man or woman in the street no longer automatically believes the professors and the doctors of history.

The following story may help to explain why

## Peter Hart

Peter Hart (born 1963, died 2010) was a Canadian academic who took a PhD in Irish history in Trinity College Dublin in the early 1990s. His influential book, *The IRA and its Enemies*, was published in 1998.

Hart became a minor celebrity on the strength of his argument that Irish Republicanism has been motivated by Catholic religious sectarianism against the Protestant minority, exemplified in particular by a violent campaign of ethnic cleansing of Protestants in southern Ireland during the War of Independence and its aftermath in 1919-22.

This argument was not original to Hart. But what he contributed was seemingly irrefutable proof based on recorded population statistics.

From the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, the Protestant and Catholic populations in Ireland have waxed and waned, for a variety of reasons which have separately and jointly affected these population groups.

There has now been a remarkable development in the Peter Hart saga. In a lecture delivered at an academic conference in Maynooth University on 21 July 2017, historian John Regan of Dundee University has demolished Hart's statistical argument.

Regan described three statistical sources, and exposed fallacies, errors and misdirection in the way these sources were used by Hart.

The background is the Census of Population, which was conducted as UK census in 1911, 1901, and at ten-year intervals; and thereafter in the 26-County Irish Free State in 1926 and onwards. The basic background figure is a decrease in the Protestant population of the 26 Counties between the census years of 1911 and 1926, amounting to a drop of around 100,000. The census period 1911 to 1926

includes the Home Rule era of 1911 to 1914, when British hegemony was at its most successful and most accepted, which might be considered benign in relation to Protestant demography. And it includes the War of Independence period 1919 to 1922, which might be considered to be 'Protestant-averse' if the ethnic cleansing hypothesis is valid.

For the Hart theory to work, it needs to be established that the 1911-26 decrease in Protestant numbers was significantly higher in the War of Independence period when Republicans were most influential and when they were engaged in armed conflict with British power.

If it turns out that Protestant population behaviour was more or less the same throughout both periods, then the Peter Hart argument collapses.

## Hart's statistical proof

The trouble is, unlike 1911 and 1926 there are no Census figures for 1919, 1920, 1921 or 1922 to make the necessary comparisons of the varying levels of the different population groups. So how can we tell whether the Republican campaign against British power disproportionately affected the Protestants during 1919-22 (as compared with the corresponding Catholic numbers, and as compared with other years)? How can Republican ethnic cleansing of Protestants be proved?

According to Regan, this is where Hart's three data sets come in. The data sets are detailed as follows.

1. Numbers of children attending Episcopalian (or Church of Ireland) schools in the Diocese of Cork.

Unlike the Population Census, these numbers were recorded annually, and can therefore serve as an annual indicator of changing levels of the (Protestant) population from which the schoolchildren came. Hart stated that almost all the 1911-26 decrease in C. of I. school attendance occurred in the War of Independence years 1920-22, with only small decrease outside of those years. In fact he states that 75% of the decrease in C. of I. school attendance occurred during these WoI years.

2. Episcopalian (C. of I.) church attendance numbers for churches in County Cork.

Hart stated that these numbers confirmed a sudden population drop, corresponding to the sudden drop in number of C. of I. schoolchildren.

3. Number of members of the Methodist Church.

Again, these confirmed a sudden drop during the Republican WoI.

On the face of it, these show that the available records provide strong confirmation that a sudden drop in the Protestant population occurred during the WoI. And contemporaneous incidents such as the Dunmanway massacre of Protestants indicate that it was the Republican campaign which produced this drastic population decrease

or ethnic cleansing. No smoke without fire, and all that.

But Regan examined these statistical data, and the methods used by Hart to deduce evidence of a sudden population drop. He disproves Hart's conclusions, and says that the data provide no evidence of a sudden population drop.

So, unless there was fire without smoke, Hart is now toast. Hopefully not roasting in Hell, but enjoying a Visiting Professorship (at least!) in the great university in the sky, the Ivory Tower of Heaven, where he can while away eternity by interviewing the dead to his heart's content.

Here is a summary of Regan's critique of Hart's argument.

Firstly the C. of I. schoolchildren figures for Cork Diocese. From 1912 to 1920 these numbers were fairly steady, at around 2,600; with a small annual decrease of around 100. No numbers are available for the years 1921 to 1924. The attendance numbers for 1925 and 1926 are just under 2,000 in each year.

So from 1912 to 1925 there is a drop of around 800. About 600 of these occur during the period 1920-25, representing an annual decrease of just over 100 during that period. This is slightly more (but not much more) than the rate of decrease during the preceding period (1912-19).

600 is 75% of 800, and this seems to be where Hart gets his headline shock-horror figure for ethnic cleansing during the Republican WoI.

### **Little and Large**

Seventy-five is a BIG number, you know. Not like three quarters. Seventy five per cent of four is three. And that's quite a lot, isn't it?

But the statistical data used by Hart as his source do not actually specify what the decrease was between 1920 and 1922. The critical WoI years' figures are absent. The problem with Hart is that he arbitrarily attributes the 75% decrease, not to 1920-25, but to 1920-22. There is nothing in the statistical records referenced by Hart that justify assigning the 600 decrease to the WoI years. The statistical record actually applies to a longer time period.

To summarise: the original data show annual decrease of around 100 for 1912-20, and AVERAGE annual decrease of just over 100 for the period 1920-25 (or the period 1920-26, in fact). In other words, no great change ON AVERAGE. (We have to say 'on average' since there are no figures available at present for the years between 1920 and 1925.)

The trouble with Hart's argument is that he loads the 1920-25 decrease onto the WoI years 1920-22, resulting in an average decrease for those years of around 200 per annum, approximately DOUBLE the annual rate of decrease for the earlier period. He ASSUMES the truth of what he was supposed to be proving!

And that is the statistical basis for Hart's claim of ethnic cleansing. He needed to prove something for 1920-22. The data in his possession applied to 1920-25. So, bingo! – he assumes the result he needs for 1920-22!

This is a .... a what? A paradigm? Maybe even a meme? Definitely something profound and lofty that I don't know the meaning of. Having spent a lifetime struggling with the

probabilistic ideas of Markov, of Kolmogorov, of Itô, all I can now say of them is: 'The fools! The fools! The fools!'

And what a fool was I, all those years of wasted effort when Peter Hart (and his supervisors, mentors and referees) had the perfect answer to the conundrums of statistics all along!

### **Church Attendance and Church Membership**

There is more. Hart supports his CoI school attendance argument with CoI church attendance data, and with Methodist membership figures, which he says give the same ball-park result. Slam-dunk, in other words.

But there are problems here also. Hart's CoI church attendance figures include St. Colman's in Macroom, which is where the RIC Auxiliaries were stationed. These Auxies were present for a couple of years, and distort the overall picture. According to Regan, the phenomenon described by Hart disappears if the St. Colman's figures are excluded.

That leaves the Methodist Church membership figures. Regan checked these and found no evidence, for 1919-22, of any significant difference from the overall rate of membership decrease. This is confirmed by a graph produced by Hart's PhD supervisor, mentor and patron, Professor David Fitzpatrick of Trinity College Dublin.

The kindest explanation for this is that Hart made a mistake. But this was academic work, so it was peer-reviewed. Peer review means that other qualified academics stake their reputations on the reliability of the work to which they give their imprimatur. In theory that is what is supposed to convey stature to academic work.

If Hart goes down, then so do his academic referees, mentors, tutors and cheerleaders. None of them shouted stop. Even if the missing 1920-22 data somehow turn up in the future, and even if any such new data corroborate Hart's theories, that will not absolve Hart & Co. from the way they handled the data up to now. How can they ever be trusted after that?

### **Arming America: a case Study in academic quality control**

In contrast, Regan's lecture described the case of American historian Michael Bellesiles who wrote a prizewinning book, 'Arming America' (2000), which claimed to provide statistical proof that, unlike the present, pre-Civil War America had very low levels of gun ownership. Just like Peter Hart, this book fed into a contemporary political controversy. Political dynamite. The gun-control lobby loved it.

But, much as one might like it to be true, the statistical proof turned out to be nonsense. Even though American history academics are, for the most part, probably not Second Amendment Warriors, their academic quality control system went into action, and the author lost his academic position and his literary prize.

In the case of Hart, Regan traced a sequence of stages in the evolution of Hart's statistical argument. Hart's 1992 thesis claimed the IRA used violence against Protestants on a sectarian or ethnic basis---simply because they were Protestants. On the strength of that he was granted Canadian Post-Doctoral Fellowship funds to add substance to his work



on the fate of Protestants in Revolutionary Cork. In other words he had the opportunity to back up his PhD thesis.

Hart accused the IRA of 'ethnic cleansing' in a 1996 essay. Despite presenting his statistical proof in *The IRA and its Enemies* (1998), he did not explicitly re-assert the ethnic cleansing allegation. It was deployed by his supporters, in particular by Fergal Keane and Geoffrey Wheatcroft (see *The Embers of Revisionism*). Though still lauding him as a model to be followed, his academic supporters began, eventually, to back away from his more extreme positions.

Other researchers uncovered defects. Regan has debunked the statistics. Even the brief summary outlined above must convey a sense of flimsiness.

How long can the academic history establishment maintain their cover-up of the Hart fraud? When will they come clean, step up to the plate, and apologise for their lack of professional integrity?

### John Regan's Maynooth lecture:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9WHtiVvmB4&t=1700s>

### Postscript:

The American Revolution had demographic consequences. A significant proportion of British loyalists became refugees from Patriot attacks. One of the reasons for the Declaration of Independence was that the mother country was not sufficiently active in the genocide of the indigenous population: '[Britain] has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages'.

Setting aside the unfounded claims of the Irish academic Hartite revisionists, were there in fact any demographic effects in southern Ireland due to the Irish War of Independence? It seems there were. But they were political and not ethnic-sectarian, so they are useless to the revisionist agenda.

The Free State forces are sometimes said to have given defeated Republican soldiers a choice between accepting the military discipline of membership of the Free State Army, and emigration --- the third option being unspoken. Certainly they emigrated in numbers.

There were other consequences.

Albert Meltzer was an English anarchist. His

autobiography, *I couldn't paint golden angels*, stated:

The desperate poverty of the local Irish population in what was comparatively a well-off working class neighbourhood generally [in London], was due to the fact that they were refugees who had been chased out of their homes which were burned with all their possessions. Most of them were children of Catholic Loyalists, not wanted by the Republicans and not welcomed in Protestant areas either. Their past associations had been service to the Crown in the forces in one degree or another, and their world vanished with the Free State. Not all thought themselves English perhaps but British certainly, and woe betide any who denied it.

... In view of their common non-Catholic background, it might seem strange that Sid and Rose sent their two sons, of whom I was the youngest, to a Roman Catholic school — I never understood why. The troubles were on in Ireland and nearly all my fellow schoolmates were Irish, recent arrivals or first generation in England, whose parents were attracted to the brickfields of the new suburbs. There were about half-a-dozen non-Catholics, mostly Irish Protestants. We had certain privileges — for instance, most of us got Thursday afternoon off — when self-employed people with cars used to take half-holidays. The headmistress seemed to accept the idea that this was a non-Catholic observance. She obligingly switched her main religion classes to Thursday afternoon to avoid disruption. In return we were frequently summoned by the headmistress for an emergency Monday morning conference. 'There's a boy just come from Ireland without any shoes, I'll give you a note for your mother to ask if you've any old shoes and you can go home five minutes early when we're having prayers'.

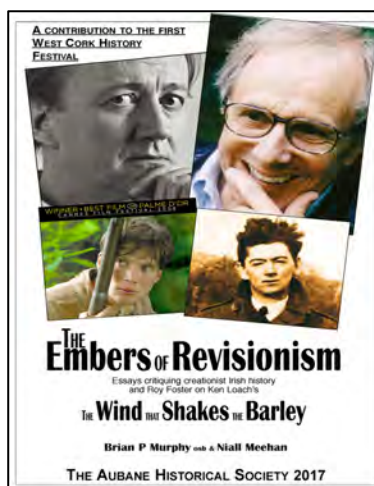
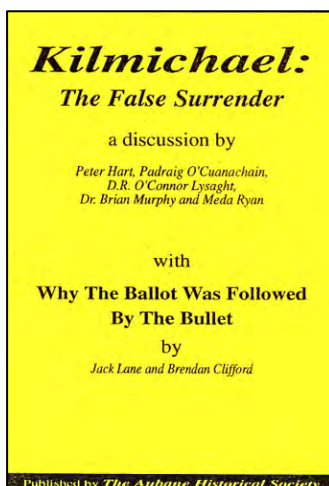
My mother used to be amazed and amused with the frequency of these notes. 'That woman must think we run a shoe shop,' she said, until one day she put down the note murmuring 'I don't believe it — there's a boy turned up without trousers'. His mother had made him a makeshift covering out of an old skirt, which she claimed was an Irish kilt. Poor lad, he never lived it down in all the years I knew him, though for the next five years wearing my prematurely discarded short trousers too long and wide for him. [Albert's father Sid Meltzer was Jewish. His mother Rose was Ulster Orange.]

The garrison element had plenty of form of their own. In the March 1918 by-election in Waterford they tried to burn out Rosamond Jacob, the Quaker suffragist and Cumann na mBan member, related to the Jacobs biscuits people. There were countless similar exploits.

In his historical focus the film-maker David Lean's *Ryan's Daughter* was more apropos than the Hartian academic history revisionists. Tragically cast out, the last shot shows the *Ryan's Daughter* character in a pony-and-trap on her way to Tralee railway station:

*There's loose women, and there's whores, and there's British soldiers' whores.*

- a line in the film.



# Peter Hart's Irish heritage

By Barry Keane

One of the stranger parts of the controversy surrounding the claims contained in the late Professor Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies* was his comment that he had no connection with Ireland and simply happened upon the Irish War of Independence as opposed to studying revolutionary violence in China. Thus, he stated that his analysis was dispassionate as he was an outsider and he was not susceptible to the kind of 'faith based history' practiced by his chief critics.

This was a central point in Fearghal McGarry's heartfelt tribute and obituary at the time of his death in 2010. Indeed, in his examination of Hart's work John Dorney commented,

One wonders, at times, if Hart, a scholar from Canada with no Irish roots, realised how explosive a proposition this was in Ireland in the 1990's.

In fact, he had more connection with Ireland than might be generally known.

Hart's grandmother was Adeline Olive Earls (1892-1942) and she was born in Ireland. In the 1901 Census, aged 8, she was living with her parents in Clonedergole outside Clones, County Monaghan. The family was Methodist. In the 1911 Census she was 17 and a Queens University Belfast undergraduate. She was living with her sister, Frances and a servant in Earls' boot shop in Fermanagh Street, Clones (which still remained open in 2012). An A. Earls, 23 and a teacher, left Liverpool on 25 August 1916 for Montreal on the Metagama. She married Edgar Murray Hill, Chief Engineer for the Canadian National Railways in Winnipeg, Canada in 1926.

Her sister, Dr. Margaret Earls from Clones was her bridesmaid according to the newspaper report. Their children Mary, Ann(e) and John were born in Winnipeg. Both of her parents died within a year of each other. Murray Hill's obituary confirms that he 'was married in 1926 in Winnipeg to Olive Earls, native of Clones, Ireland'. Anita Hill had married Whyllie Wellington Baird on 25 Aug 1920. Anne was raised from the age of seven in Amhurst, Nova Scotia by her aunt Anita Elliott (Mrs. W.W.) Baird to whom her 'unconventional' biography of Miss Marple is dedicated. She married David Hart of Nova Scotia and had 3 children, Susan, Peter and Stephen Hart.

Unsurprisingly, given where they lived and their religion, three members of the family signed the Ulster Covenant to defend Ulster against Home Rule in 1912. To many of the opponents of this Home Rule their rights and privileges under British rule would be swamped in a Roman-Catholic dominated Parliament in Dublin. Adeline's sister Frances E., and her brother, Thomas James, living on Fermanagh Street signed the Ulster Covenant as did

William (either her brother or father). She did not. Another brother Walker Rennick Earls was killed at Vimy ridge. Cementing the family position as 'unionist aristocracy', Adeline's cousin, Margaret Earls was the

second wife of Fred McCoy, Ulster Unionist M.P. He was the speaker of the Northern Ireland Parliament for a brief period in 1956. He eventually retired from parliament in 1965.

On the other side of the family, his father was born on a British Army base in the Caribbean where his grandfather was stationed in 1934. His grandfather was Arthur Stanley Hart, who was a sailor, and was from Sheffield. He did not join the British Army before 1923 and was coincidentally stationed in Ballykinlar in 1926, according to his military file.

After the army Mr. Hart subsequently became an Anglican minister and archdeacon in Nova Scotia. The family are also recorded travelling back and forth to Canada. Originally from England Arthur Stanley was living in Bolsover, Derbyshire in the 1901 census and this is the address given in his Board of Trade record when he joined the Merchant Navy. The family were originally coal miners. It is not possible to trace them further back than this generation.

I have no idea whether this background had any influence on Hart's historical perspective nor do I know if he was even aware of his Irish unionist background when he came to Dublin and began research on of all things, the IRA in the 1920 period.

It may have been an extraordinary coincidence but 'growing up in Newfoundland, he had an awareness of, and felt a proximity to Ireland'. However, even though his mother was only seven when his grandparents died it would have been somewhat unusual that he was unaware of his family background. I do know that in the acknowledgements of his thesis he thanked his 'mother who read it from beginning to end, leaving few pages untouched or unimproved'. Perhaps many of those who knew him well might be able to clarify how much he was aware of his background.



[A fully annotated version of this article is available at Barry Keane's academia.edu page, <http://www.academia.edu/34521711/>]

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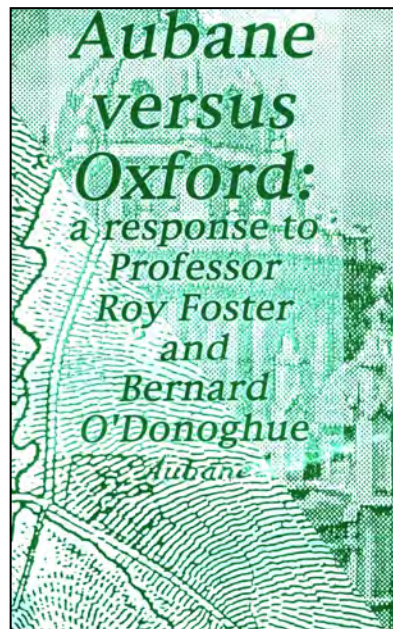
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As a result we have been shadowing Professor Foster ever since, beginning with *Aubane Versus Oxford* in 2002. It includes Tom Bartlett's *Times Literary Supplement* review of *Telling Tales*. Professor

Foster apparently asked that it not be published, which is why we republished it.

We have monitored how revisionist historians have been making it up in Ireland ever since.

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